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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 TAIPEI 003466

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SUBJECT: LY ELECTION PREVIEW: WEST CENTRAL TAIWAN

REF: A. TAIPEI 03340

[B.](#) TAIPEI 03294

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal, Reason: 1.4 (B/D)

[¶](#)1. (C) Summary: Changhua County (ten seats) and Taichung City (eight seats) are likely to be major battlegrounds in the struggle for control of the Legislative Yuan (LY) in this December's elections. Both districts have traditionally been strongholds for the Pan-Blue, but weakness in the Pan-Blue alliance and shifts in voting patterns seen in the March presidential election have encouraged the Pan-Green to go on the offensive. In both districts, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has nominated all of its incumbents and added a strong moderate to the slate in each in the hopes of taking an extra seat and getting closer to a working majority in the LY. If the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) candidate in Changhua and a pro-Green former Mayor in Taichung also do well, the Pan-Green could potentially take two extra seats in each district, although a gain of just one seat in each is more likely. The Pan-Blue, for its part, is trying to hold onto the seats it currently has, but problems of overnomination and the presence of ex-KMT mavericks threaten to undermine their position. End Summary.

Changhua County: Shifting Toward Pan-Green?

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[¶](#)2. (U) Changhua County (pop. 1,316,321), located on Taiwan's central west coast, is represented in the LY with ten seats. Nineteen candidates are registered for the December elections, in which Changhua will likely be a key battleground in the struggle for control of the LY. Historically the district has solidly been Pan-Blue territory: in the 2001 LY election, they took 54 percent of the vote, while the Pan-Green mustered only 38 percent. However, in the March presidential elections, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won in Changhua by 4.5 percent. Encouraged by this shift, the Pan-Green have nominated six candidates in the hopes of winning a majority in Changhua for the first time. The Pan-Blue, confident in their traditional control of the county, have aggressively nominated seven candidates.

DPP: A Team Campaign

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[¶](#)3. (C) DPP Changhua County Chairman Liang Tseng-hsiang expressed optimism about his party's chances this year. The DPP has nominated all four of its incumbents -- Charles Chiang (Chao-yi), Chiu Chuang-chin, Chou Ching-yu, and Wei Ming-ku -- for reelection and hopes to gain a seat with the nomination of Ke Jin-te. Ke is a protege of the County Magistrate Weng Chin-chu and a member of the moderate New Tide faction of the DPP. Liang said that the party plans to use the same "joint campaign" strategy that the DPP is using elsewhere, hoping that a team approach and an emphasis on the importance of taking a majority in the LY will result in an even distribution of votes among the candidates. When asked about the possible use of a "peipiao" vote-distribution scheme, he said it was too early to discuss, noting that incumbent lawmaker Charles Chiang is opposed to it. Peipiao schemes generally assume that each candidate will have a core group of supporters who will vote for him regardless of the party's instructions. The more obedient party supporters are then divided among all candidates to ensure that each gets enough votes to win election. Chiang reportedly believes that most of his supporters would be more loyal to the party than to him, and that much his support would therefore evaporate if a peipiao system were implemented. Liang said he was not so worried about the incumbents' chances, noting that they had been elected in 2001 when the DPP garnered just under 30 percent of the vote. This time, he estimated, the DPP should have no problem taking at least 40 percent, which would be more than sufficient to elect four or even five candidates. (Note: Under Taiwan's single non-transferable vote election system, winning candidates are often elected with as little as five percent of the vote in a ten seat district like Changhua. See Reftel A. End Note.) He added that Chen Shui-bian, who won the presidential election in March with over 52 percent of the vote in Changhua, will "without a doubt" come out and stump for all five candidates.

KMT: Cultivating Local Connections

**14.** (C) KMT Changhua County Chairman Hsu Fu-ming said the DPP's performance in the March presidential election does not worry him. Local connections and image, he said, determine the outcome of LY elections more than party affiliation. Hsu noted that all five of the KMT nominees have long cultivated strong grassroots support and connections in the local townships and villages in Changhua County. For example, incumbent lawmaker Chen Chieh, who is running for reelection, is the brother of the mayor of Changhua City. Chen Hsiu-ching, another KMT nominee, is the wife of Lin Jin-chun, a KMT legislator who will step down at the end of this term. Each of the other KMT nominees (incumbent Cho Po-yuan and newcomers Chen Chung-ming and Lin Chang-ming) has a local base of support, he said. The KMT's strategy, Hsu explained, is to assign each candidate an exclusive region where they can build a base and allow them to pick up additional votes by campaigning in open districts. Hsu said that he was confident that with this candidate-oriented campaign and the organized support of local campaign offices, all five candidates will "definitely" reach the 40,000 vote threshold needed to get elected.

PFP: A Nomination Blunder?

**15.** (C) Despite taking only one seat in the previous election, the People First Party (PFP) has nominated two candidates this year. PFP Changhua Chairman Hung Pen-chiao admitted that newcomer Chen Chao-jung's chances for election are not as good as the incumbent Hsieh Chang-chieh, who "is much more organized and has a lot of local support". Hung was unable to articulate a coherent strategy for the election of the PFP's two candidates, and instead responded to AIT's questions with a litany of complaints ranging from the injustice of the last presidential election to the larger parties' unfair vote-buying practices. Without vote-buying, he claimed, the PFP's two candidates would certainly be elected.

TSU: Lost in the Crowd

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**16.** (C) The Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) took eight percent of the vote in the previous election, enough for one seat, but because their vote was split between two candidates, the seat instead went to an independent, Chen Chin-ting, who is not running for reelection. This year, the TSU decided to nominate only one candidate, Chen Yang-te, the less popular of the two nominees from 2001. Chen's lack of name-recognition will be a significant challenge in the uphill fight to distinguish himself from the six other relatively unknown candidates running without major party support. Chen Jing-ting, who has the Nonpartisan Solidarity Union (NSU) nomination and independent Huang Wen-ling, the daughter of former Central Election Commissioner George Huang, stand out as his most likely competitors, according to DPP Chairman Liang. However, most observers think that the chances of the TSU or independent candidates winning election this year are all exceedingly slim.

Taichung City: Solid Blue Territory?

**17.** (U) Just north of Changhua County is Taichung City (pop. 1,114,080), Taiwan's third largest metropolitan district, which will have eight LY seats. This is one seat more than it currently has, a reflection of the city's growing population. Taichung is also considered a long-time Pan-Blue stronghold. In the 2001 LY election, the Pan-Blue took 52 percent of the vote and four seats, while the Pan-Green took 42 percent and the remaining three seats. In the 2004 presidential election, the city remained Blue territory, voting for KMT nominee Lien Chan by a five percent margin. Six of Taichung's seven incumbents are running for reelection this year, but the additional seat this year has energized a large number of new candidates (including a popular former Mayor) to try for election.

Pan-Green: New Seat Might Tip the Balance

**18.** (C) The Pan-Green has nominated all of its incumbents (Lee Ming-hsien and Hsieh Ming-yuan of the DPP and Ho Min-hao of the TSU) as well as a DPP newcomer, Wang Shih-shun of the moderate New Tide faction, in the hopes of claiming Taichung's new seat. DPP Taichung City Chairman Chen Da-jun acknowledged that Taichung has traditionally been a Pan-Blue stronghold, but he said he is confident that the DPP's organized "joint campaign" strategy and a successful peipiao system will help all three DPP candidates win election. Everybody AIT spoke with agreed that TSU candidate Ho's seat was safe because of his incumbent status and his strong family connections.

**¶9.** (C) The Pan-Blue nominated more conservatively, hoping only to hold onto the territory they already have. Newcomer Tsai Jin-lung will join popular incumbent Lu Hsiu-yen in

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running under the KMT banner. The other KMT incumbent, Hung Chao-nan, decided to step down after nine terms as a legislator to make room for a younger generation, explained KMT Taichung City Chairman Mu Kuei-hsin. Mu said that rising Taiwanese identity will likely erode the Pan-Blue's ten percent lead from the last LY election, but he was still confident they will hold onto four seats. The KMT's support level is high enough that it only needs to make sure to split the vote evenly between its two candidates to ensure their victory, he explained, so their strategy is simply to ask supporters to pair off and "cast one vote for Lu and one for Tsai."

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**¶10.** (C) The PFP nominated both of its incumbents, Daniel Hwang (Yih-jiau) and Shen Chih-hui. Hwang enjoys better name-recognition, but Shen's position is safer, said PFP Taichung City Chairman Lin Ping-yuan. "In Taichung," he explained, "service counts for more than popularity." As James Soong's spokesman, Huang has spent most of his time in Taipei, while Shen has taken time to provide services to her voters. Taichung Deputy Mayor Hsiao Chia-chih agreed, saying that Shen's record of constituent service would ensure her reelection despite her notorious role in leading a crowd of demonstrators in an attempt to storm the High Court on the evening of March 20 in protest of the presidential election. With Shen's seat safe, Lin said his campaign is focused more on helping Huang win reelection. However not all of Shen's voters, apparently, are so satisfied with her service record. On October 29, Shen was stabbed by a disgruntled constituent allegedly upset with her for failing to help him recover money lost in a scam. According to newspapers, her injuries were not serious and she is doing fine.

Independents, Mavericks, and the Former Mayor

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**¶11.** (C) The addition of a new seat in Taichung has tempted many independent candidates into joining the fray. No fewer than eight candidates registered as independents by the October 12 deadline. In addition to these, Lin Pei-le registered with the Nonpartisan Solidarity Union (NSU) after failing in the KMT primary. New Party member Chen Su-wan will run under the KMT banner, although his campaign is not otherwise receiving support from the KMT. (Note: This reflects an agreement reached when the New Party agreed to dissolve and have its members rejoin the KMT. End Note.) Most observers agree that these independents and mavericks have little chance for election, although Lin and Chen might siphon off some of the KMT's support. The one exception, however, is former Taichung Mayor Chang Wen-ying, who enjoys high name-recognition and will likely end up squeezing out the weakest of the major party candidates. Although she left the DPP in 2001 and has registered for this election as an independent, her husband is the former DPP Taichung City Chairman, and she generally favors Pan-Green positions.

Comment: DPP Storming the Walls

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**¶12.** (C) It appears the DPP has spotted cracks in the fortifications of traditional Pan-Blue strongholds Changhua County and Taichung City, and has gone on the attack. In both districts it has renominated all its incumbents and added a strong New Tide moderate in the hopes of claiming an extra seat in each. As we have seen in other districts, the DPP strategy is to run all their candidates as a team to ensure they are equally familiar to voters, while they keep a peipiao scheme in reserve in case it looks like the votes will not be distributed evenly. This sophisticated national strategy starkly contrasts with the lack of coordination and discipline on the Pan-Blue side. Pan-Blue candidates generally run independent campaigns centered on their "home turf," which can result in lopsided vote distribution and, if the party has overnominated, bitter infighting. Although the Pan-Blue nominations in Changhua County and Taichung City were more disciplined than in neighboring Yunlin County (Reftel B), the presence of several ex-KMT mavericks in Taichung and the PFP's inexplicable decision to nominate two candidates in Changhua could spell trouble.

**¶13.** (C) In Changhua, all the incumbents are widely expected safely to win reelection. In addition, the KMT should have no trouble getting at least one of its newcomers elected. This gives both camps four seats. The DPP's Ke, the TSU's Chen, and one of the remaining KMT candidates will compete for the remaining two seats. This means Changhua is likely

to split 5-5 (giving the Pan-Green an extra seat in the LY), or possibly 6-4 if the Pan-Green side campaigns particularly well. The Pan-Green will probably also gain ground in Taichung. There too, the six incumbents (2 DPP, 1 TSU, 1 KMT, 2 PFP) are all expected to win. The remaining two seats will be contested by the DPP's Wang, the KMT's Tsai, and the pro-DPP former Mayor Chang. Again, the most likely outcome will be a 4-4 split (meaning an extra seat for Pan-Green) with a distinct possibility that the city will go 5-3 in favor of the Pan-Green. End Comment.

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